



NEWSPAPER CONSUMER ADVERTISEMENTS AS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Advertising can be found everywhere around us. We come across advertisements in newspapers, magazines, on billboards, television, radio, social sites, mobiles, computers, and the means of public transport and at any place the sponsor pays to distribute their message. It is performed using various media types, with different methods and techniques most suited. Newspaper consumer Advertisement is a kind of structured arrangement of communication in a limited, provided, and available space. Communication basically involves sharing and understanding messages and meanings. Successful communication takes place only when there is an understanding between the sender and receiver of their backgrounds. The words and pictures used in advertisements will have varieties of meanings. The most common are denotative, connotative, and contextual. The newspapers are cheap, easily available, and more reachable than glossy magazines. The process of communication in reading newspapers exists at the mass level rather than an individual level or elite group. It also includes non-verbal codes such as graphics, settings, colours, postures, attire, denotation of the products and services, and other visuals which may add meaning to the advertisement text as a whole. The present paper attempts at dealing with how newspaper consumer advertisements function as a tool of communication to reach and influence potential consumers.

Keywords: advertisements, media, communication, codes, readers, consumers

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'advertise' originates from the Latin 'advertere' which means 'to turn toward or to take a note of'. Advertising is all about making the probable consumers turn towards and be attracted to the products being shown in advertisements by the complete manipulation of symbols, techniques, visuals and language appeals designed by advertising professionals. Visual and verbal messages are a significant part of advertising. They are intended to attract attention and produce some response by the viewers. Advertising is widespread and practically impossible to escape from. The universality of advertising and its creative elements are designed to cause viewers to take note. Many researchers have tried to define advertisement from variety of perspectives. Consequently, there are many definitions of advertisement. Some of them are as follows.

Gajendra Singh Chauhan, in the book *Language, Media and Society: Essence of Advertising Communication*, defines advertising as:

... A communication that involves all the linguistic aspects of language, which is the medium through which the main transmission of the message of an advertisement is carried out, though visual aids often help to amplify the message (2010: 11).

Chauhan focuses more on the linguistic aspects employed to convey the message through advertisements. The visuals in advertisement are complementary to emphasize the ideas conveyed through the advertisements and they can attract the attention of the readers. According to Bovee,

Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified sponsors through the various media (1992: 7).

Advertisement is a non-personal form of communication because it is targeted towards unknown audience but towards certain group of people. Advertising focuses on one particular product or service and brings that product or service to the attention of customers. Thus, an advertising strategy for one product may be very different than that for another product. Sponsor of advertisement may use variety of media which best suits to the convenience and effectiveness of their advertising. The advertisement is a community notice planned to spread information with a vision to encourage the sales of marketable goods and services. Joseph. R. Dominic simply defined advertising as:

...Any form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, and services usually paid for by an identified sponsor (2002: 369).



The manufacturers of the product or the dealers who sell the products have to sponsor consumer advertisements. Consumer advertisements in the newspaper are the significant source of financial support to the newspaper. The definitions mentioned here consider 'ideas' as an important factor that advertisements impose subtly. Advertisements not only sell products or services but they also reflect certain ideologies. These definitions seem more inclusive because they add 'ideas' to their scope. Certain ideas are imposed through advertisements directly or sometimes very subtly. Most of the definitions include the persuasion characteristic of advertising, without which it is complicated to attain advertising intentions.

A survey of recent advertising and marketing textbooks shows that there is no universally accepted definition of advertising. However, specific recurrent components such as non-personal, paid, identified sponsors, mass media, and persuasion make advertising a skilful means of mass communication. It may take the visual, oral or written form to promote a product through persuasive communication to achieve pre-determined objectives by changing and reinforcing the desired attitude of the consumers at the time of purchase. Bearden et al. define advertisement as:

The element of the marketing communication mix that is non-personal paid for an identified sponsor, and disseminated through channels of mass communication to promote the adoption of goods, services, person or ideas (2003: 37).

Even if there are many definitions, the essential point of consideration is that advertisement is a kind of wide-ranging communication of information usually highly paid for and powerfully persuasive because of linguistic and non-linguistic elements creatively employed by copywriters.

Advertising is universal in the sense that it has become part and parcel of the lives of all human beings irrespective of their region, state, or nation. Unlike personal selling, the sales message and its presentation are not created on the spot with the customer watching. It is produced in as many ways as the writer can conceive and is rewritten, tested, improved and introduced with every trick and appeal known to affect consumers. Although advertisers may not meet the individual customer face to face, nor be able to revise the sales message according to that individual's reactions at the time, they do have consideration about users and their likes or dislikes. Advertising can be far cheaper per potential customer than personal selling, which deals with one customer at a time. Advertising deals with hundreds, thousands and millions of customers at a time. It is a good idea as a sales tool since it can do a great part of the selling job.

Considering the definitions mentioned above, an advertisement can be defined as a collective system of persuasive techniques, including linguistic and non-linguistic codes employed to

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promote selling. In an advertisement, persuasive strategies are used to achieve two purposes: the first is the short term purpose linked to the immediate purchase of the product or service and the second is the long-term purpose linked to creating an attitude favourable for buying that product, i.e. reliability. Advertising is thus, a form of marketing communication mix employed to encourage or persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to continue or take some new action that results in buying the product or service being advertised.

Advertising is an attentive action plan intended at a specific target market and consumers. The advertiser must not be aimless. The information provided through advertisement should be accurate, definite, perceptible and moderate in length. An effective ad not only says what to say but also how to say. Advertising is a non-personal form of communication. The information, methods, media and other advertising mechanisms are expected to abide by the advertising policies, laws, and rules and should be under the supervision of the public.

An advertisement is an organic form of communication which is complete in itself. The search for meaning is an inevitable process in the literary critical tradition. Even though, advertising is one-way public communication, as the anonymous public cannot answer the copywriter back and cannot express their opinion; it forms certain ideologies in the minds of the readers and readers try to follow them in their real lives. Media endures advertising as they go hand in hand. It is a kind of tool for communication in society or with the masses. It is used to store or circulate data from society. Advertising can also be used as an effective tool for a social cause and can be instrumental in bringing an admirable change in society by generating awareness among the population about social causes.

The consumer advertising includes cosmetics ads, clothing ads, jewellery ads, food ads, health and fitness related ads, automobile ads, home electric appliance ads, and the ads of other products and services which are used and purchased by ordinary human beings. These ads are aimed at creating a response and changing approach in audience towards the product. These kinds of ads continuously haunt the people almost daily in the newspaper and they will still need the information to guide their purchaser. So the advertising copywriter's most important task is attracting consumers' attention. Consumer advertisements are sponsored by the manufacturer of the product or the dealer who sells the product. This has to be attractive and arouse the feeling of the readers; otherwise people will skip to the next page. Such ads are typical with straight-line copies and make use of minimum question copy as well as narrative composition. Though copywriters have much more to express in consumer advertising, they concentrate only to convince consumers to buy the product. Since newspapers are a medium of mass communication the advertisements in them can be read by many readers.



The word 'encoding' in communication process has to do with the variety of processes used to put ideas or thoughts in any specific form of communication using the signs of the language. The sign is, however, a combination of signifier and signified. Ferdinand de Saussure puts it that these two components are combined in such a way that they cannot be separated. The characteristics and functions of language are based on the signs used. The social aspects of signs have to be taken into consideration while dealing with the meanings of the signs. These signs have to be used in a particular context to convey a particular meaning to the particular target readers or receivers in order to make the communication process a complete and meaningful one. Newspaper consumer advertisements are full of such signs which have been incorporated into the text to make the advertisement a united and complete text that conveys the complete sense. In literary view, a 'sign' is a mark that exposes what is normally hidden. Signs are not associated with intentional communication but may serve as additions when they modify the meaning. The receiver gets insights into the meanings through the signs.

The symbol of the advertisement is based on the culture he or she belongs to. It thus, makes the receiver get the intentional message correctly and the communication takes place. The words used in the ad cannot be interpreted in isolation but one has to take into consideration a complex interaction with pictures, other texts, and people who make and experience them. The act of communication does not take place without participants, intertext, situation, paralanguage, etc. Advertising is a dynamic phenomenon and not a static one. According to Cook though printed ads are motionless, allow us a closer observation of the text. Text is used to mean the linguistic forms, temporarily separated from the context for the purpose of analysis. However, the context includes many elements such as substance, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants and their functions.

Verbal and non-verbal messages are essentially signs combined in an organized manner to form a message. Advertising communication takes place not only through linguistic signs but non-linguistic signs also play a crucial role in deciphering the meanings of the advertising text. The book edited by Stephen Heath, entitled *Roland Barthes: Image, Music, Text* (1977) includes the essay *Rhetoric of the Image* in which Roland Barthes asserts that there are three levels of interpretation of a 'sign' such as 'denotative', 'connotative' and 'ideological' (1977: 46). These 'signs' are the basic idea of study in semiotics either verbal or non-verbal. It takes into account anything that carries meaning through which the process of communication takes place.

Advertisements in newspapers are two-dimensional which means they have to present their message effectively without moving pictures or beautiful voices. The way non-verbal codes and texts are embedded in consumer advertisements is not an innocent or value-neutral workout. Advertisements are considered a socio-economic package. The message of the ad is



highly coated and is carried out in such a way as to generate multiple levels of meanings and responses. Simultaneously, the message encoded in the ads is highly target-oriented and aimed at particular consumers or readers. These meanings may be dependent on various variables such as gender, education, age, and social background. These variables are different for each individual so the visual elements in any ad are organized to produce responses that may be well-ordered and understood in ways that an advertiser wishes. The non-verbal configuration of consumer advertisements takes into account the social, cultural, existential, and economic reality of the target consumers and it revolves around their lifestyle or status and living sociocultural preferences.

Newspaper consumer advertisements make use of celebrity and model as the endorsement which has become a major part of the modern marketing communication strategy. It is used to create harmony between the brand image and consumers of the product being advertised. Consumer advertisements not only inform the readers of the products but spread hidden ideologies. In this sense advertisements are systematic and well-planned text that attracts attention, conveys information, stimulates desire, creates conviction, and ultimately leads the reader to buy the product or follow the ideas presented through the advertisement. These advertisements aim to promote a product, idea or belief. Advertisements convey different messages which are combined in the advertisement text through verbal and non-verbal signs. The overall consumer culture in today's life is made up of meanings between consumers and marketers. This culture is shaped by the advertisements and it also shapes the advertisements in return. So, there is a mutual relationship between culture and advertisements. Using a finite number of signs, advertisers may convey an infinite number of different messages thereby leaving a large scope for encoding and decoding at both the ends of communication process.

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